



FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bulletin

U.S. Department of the Interior

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ANNOUNCES
RECREATIONAL FISHING INITIATIVES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to create a Branch of Recreational Fisheries and has also adopted a new action plan for fishery resources, Service Director Mollie Beattie announced June 13 at the annual meeting of the Outdoor Writers Association of America in Orono, Maine.

The new branch will be the Service's liaison with the sport fishing constituency and will promote the overall conservation and enhancement of the nation's sport fisheries. The branch also will work closely with sport fishing organizations and industry in promoting fishing opportunities and aquatic education and outreach.

"The Service has a continuing mandate to support recreational fishing within the framework of our overall mission to conserve the nation's aquatic ecosystems," Beattie said. "The Branch of Recreational Fisheries will help us better meet this mandate.

"In particular, the branch will serve to provide fishing and aquatic education opportunities to our nation's increasingly

urban population. We especially hope to give children in urban areas more opportunities to fish and to learn about aquatic resources," Beattie said.

Establishment of the Recreational Fisheries branch has been proposed as part of an overall reorganization of the Service's headquarters office in Washington, DC. The reorganization plan must undergo formal approvals and is expected to be implemented beginning in October 1994.

The Service supports recreational fishing through a number of its programs. For example, more than half of the 498 national wildlife refuges are open to recreational fishing. An additional three refuges were opened to fishing last year and more are expected to be opened this year.

The Service has constructed state-of-the-art, universally accessible facilities on many national wildlife refuges to make fishing opportunities available to more Americans.

The Service also administers the Sport Fish Restoration Program which is funded by excise taxes and motor fuel taxes provided by anglers and boaters.

In addition, the Service's 77 National Fish Hatcheries raise and distribute nearly 200 million fish annually, most of which directly support recreational fishing. The agency also provides scientific research to state, tribal, and federal fishery managers that helps them make informed decisions regarding management of their fisheries.

In May, Director Beattie approved an Action Plan for Fishery Resources and Aquatic Ecosystems that includes provisions to enhance recreational fishing.

For example, the plan calls on the Service to develop and implement comprehensive fishery management plans and assessments on all national wildlife refuges with aquatic habitat. This includes providing public education and compatible recreational opportunities on refuges.

Further, the plan calls on the Service to develop closer partnerships through its Federal Aid Sport Fish Restoration program with the states, private industry, conservation organizations, and the public to protect and restore fishery resources and aquatic habitat. This includes encouraging promotion of diverse fishing opportunities that meet the public need while adhering to the principles of biodiversity conservation and management.

Last fall, the Service helped found the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, a newly formed group of sport fishing and boating advocates from both the public and private sectors. The council was created to coordinate the activities of National Fishing Week and provide advice to the Director on matters concerning angling and recreational boating. These goals include educating the public about the value of healthy aquatic ecosystems, fostering ethics and stewardship in angling, and increasing participation in angling.

The Service recently joined the National Biological Survey in sponsoring two projects that will significantly benefit recreational fisheries and aquatic ecosystems. One project will establish a National Fish Broodstock Database and Registry. This registry will compile information on breeding history, hatchery performance, and contributions to sport fisheries from hatchery-released fish.

The other project will develop natural genetic markers to enable recreational fishery managers to determine the growth and survival of hatchery fish after they are released in the wild. Together, these two projects will allow fishery managers to match more accurately sport fish broodstock with habitat conditions and maintain genetic diversity in recreational fisheries.

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